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From the President: Sparking Innovation at DePaul

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Photo by DePaul University/Jeff Carrion

SPARKING INNOVATION AT DEPAUL

Since my childhood, I have always been a video game enthusiast. Pong was my game of choice back in the day. As I learn more about DePaul's game design program in the College of Computing and Digital Media, I am both impressed and envious of the students enrolled in these classes—especially with the addition of a new game development studio.

As part of the university's strategic plan, we launched the new Academic Growth and Innovation Fund, a \$2 million fund, this past fall to encourage and support innovative academic ideas that will have a positive revenue impact within the next three years. Located on our Loop campus, the DePaul Originals Game Studio is one of more than a dozen projects supported through the innovation fund.

In the DePaul Originals Game Studio, students learn in an interdisciplinary lab that produces high-quality games for commercial platforms. Led by Allen Turner, a professional lecturer in the School of Design, students gain the experience of working in a larger studio on a game that has multiple pieces. Projects can last a couple of years, which means students may focus on a single portion of the game at any given time—a typical workflow in a professional design studio. When the game is complete, students receive development credit on the final shipped product.

Through the innovation fund, the studio has procured a physical space, purchased equipment and hired students to serve as studio workers and undergraduate assistants (two programmers, two designers and two artists) who are all currently working on a prototype.

Another project supported by the Academic Growth and Innovation Fund is the Urban Studies Cluster. Originally envisioned by Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco, dean of DePaul's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, the Urban Studies Cluster is intended to foster collaboration among faculty across academic departments, as well as to provide students with enhanced course offerings.

The cluster includes six graduate programs: public health, social work, refugee and forced migration studies, public service, sociology and sustainable urban development; four undergraduate programs: community service studies, criminology, public policy and sociology; and two centers: the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development and the Center for Community Health Equity.

Cities are more than buildings—they are cultural manifestations. Students who plan to pursue careers in public policy or community service, for example, need to understand the complexities that make up an urban environment. With support from the innovation fund, the Urban Studies Cluster will offer a new, multidisciplinary course co-taught by DePaul faculty and community experts that will address gun violence in Chicago. Students also will have access to paid research opportunities, as well as a conference and summits where they can present their findings.

At DePaul, we embrace a culture of creativity and discovery. The DePaul Originals Game Studio and Urban Studies Cluster are only two of many innovative projects happening right now at your university, and you can read about more initiatives in this issue of DePaul Magazine. I hope you share my enthusiasm for following their progress.

A. Gabriel Esteban, PhD
President